

A GREAT HOME MISSION FIELD.

Of the ninety millions of population in the United States, about one-ninth, ten millions, is Negro, including those of pure African descent and those who are of mixed blood. That the two races, the white and the black, may live in the same land, without wrong and injustice to either, and be mutually helpful, is a great and complex problem, which may remain unsolved for many years by the wisest and best of men. Its solution must be committed, as are other serious problems, to him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.

Nine millions of the negro race in this land are in the States of the South. After forty years of free access to other parts of the country, with much of promise held out to them in the North, the negroes have chosen as a race to remain in the South. Many have found by experiment that the conditions in the South, as to climate, opportunity and freedom from restraint, make it home to them. The negro knows that in the essential struggle for existence the spirit of the South has been the spirit of kindness and helpfulness. Booker Washington tells in all sections, to the whites of the North and to his own race in the South, that "it is in the South that the black man finds an open sesame in labour, industry and business that is not surpassed anywhere." The negro problem belongs to the whole country, but to the South especially it is vital and of most serious concern.

With all the trouble that the lower class of negroes has given, the failure to keep promises, the vagrancy, the crime, the cost of courts and penal institutions, and some discouraging facts, it is yet true that there has been progress. If we look far back to the condition of the races in Africa, and its lowest grade of barbarians, brutal and vicious in the extreme, and then at the general condition of the ten millions of Africans in this country, no one can doubt that they were brought here for their good. Slavery itself, as it was in the Southern States, was an uplift from the savage, cruel, cannibal existence of the forests of Africa. It gave government and discipline and industry and restraint. It gave the negroes a white race of the highest type on which to depend, enlightened, Christian, merciful and kind. The progress of the American negro began when he was brought out of the darkness of Africa into the light of America.

Especially was the African blessed in coming to a Christian land, and into contact with the Christian religion. From fetichism and the most horrid witchcraft, he came to the land of the Bible, and the truth and grace of God found their way down, to the conversion of many and to the betterment and happiness of all. The story of the service rendered to the slaves of the South by the Christian religion, directly and indirectly, materially and spiritually can never be adequately told. Out of the grossest darkness a great company came to Christian faith and life, humbly, often erringly, yet truly and savingly.

Our outlook upon the future of the race in our land, and of the ultimate results is increasingly optimistic. The widely diffused worth of common school education given freely to the blacks by the tax-paying whites has not been altogether in vain. The number of those who seek yet more of education steadily

grows. The effects in self-respect, in self-support, in industry and in morals are distinctly marked. The better class, who own lands and make decent and comfortable homes, and strive to protect their children from vice, and build churches and seek the welfare of their race is steadily growing in number and in influence. From farm laborers, in the last ten or fifteen years, a great number became tenants, farm managers and then farm owners. The value of negro farm property about sixteen millions of acres, is estimated at two hundred and thirty millions of dollars. And the man, white or black, who of the sweat of his brow has bought a home, is a hundred times the better citizen. With the home, in town or country, has come the sense of the importance of household protection, and the growth of domestic virtues.

It is estimated that four millions and a half of the negroes in the South are church members, and three millions more are adherents; or more than two-thirds of our negro population are related to some church. They are principally Baptist and Methodist, while all the churches are doing some good work for the colored people, and all are sowing the seeds of the kingdom.

Numerous are the methods that are tried for the welfare of the negro in the South, industrial, legal, moral, educational and religious. From the North and from the South money has been given freely for all sorts of schemes and institutions, and there is a growing number of educated teachers and preachers working for their own people.

Among the methods of teaching the negro race which have promise of good results, the old fashioned Sunday-school for colored people, taught and conducted by white teachers, might well be revived. White ministers as evangelists will have a hearing for the gospel in many places. The help given to negro preachers by the white brethren, instruction, counsel, sympathy, is availing much. And the expressions of regard and sympathy for the well-doing will be effective. Let the prayers of 115 churches be offered for the lowly African at our doors, that he may be protected from evil and be brought to the knowledge of the truth:

A significant statement is made in the announcement of the Bingham School of Asheville, to the effect that "during the last twenty years as many as fifty students in the north and four in the south have been put to death by hazers, and no has been punished for these murders." It is to the credit of the Bingham School, or any other of which it may be true, that no case of hazing has ever occurred within its jurisdiction. We trust that it is characteristic of our boys in the south that they are too brave and honorable to stoop to the cowardly and treacherous practice in which overwhelming numbers, by means of deceit and betrayal, torture the helpless victim of their malice; as parents respect their sons and would foster within them the spirit of self-respect, they should avoid institutions of learning whose moral tone is so low as to admit of hazing.

If God can keep a little flower stainless, white as snow, amid clouds of black dust, can he keep hearts in like purity in his world of sin?—J. R. Miller.